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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR OES/ETC JAN MCALPINE  
BRASILIA FOR HUB ANNE BRAGHETTA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE CONGRESS APPROVES TEMPORARY LOGGING  
MORATORIUM

¶1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified, and not  
for Internet distribution.

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Summary  
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¶2. (SBU) Environmental law in Argentina took a significant  
step forward as both houses of the Argentine Congress passed  
a forestry law that will temporarily halt all logging of  
native forests. If the president promulgates the law, a  
moratorium on logging will be imposed for up to one year  
while provincial governments survey their forests to  
determine which areas warrant permanent protection. That the  
law is both strict and mandates cash payments to affected  
parties raises questions regarding Argentina's capacity to  
implement it and keep it from becoming a patronage vehicle.  
End Summary.

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A Pragmatic Bill  
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¶3. (U) Argentina moved to strengthen environmental  
protections in November, as both houses of the Argentine  
Congress passed the Ley de Bosques, or Law of the Forest,  
which will temporarily put a stop to all logging of native  
forests. If President Nestor Kirchner or President-Elect  
Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (who takes office December 10)  
promulgates the law, a moratorium on logging will be imposed  
for up to one year while provincial governments survey their  
forests to determine which areas warrant permanent  
protection. The law is supported by Environment Secretary  
Romina Picolotti, and observers believe a presidential  
signature is likely. Monica Gabay, an official in the  
Forestry Bureau of the Environment Secretariat, called the  
passage of the law a good advance, but told EmbOff that  
&success will depend heavily on the implementation of the  
law.

¶4. (U) This version of the forestry law -- approved by  
Congress after almost two years of debate -- is notable for  
its attempt to balance the need for environmental protection  
with an understanding of the law's likely economic  
consequences. Many of the native forests of particular  
interest are located in the economically struggling northern  
region of the country. To overcome the concerns of northern  
legislators, the bill earmarks 0.3% of the national budget to  
provide compensation for the economic consequences of the  
logging ban. Thirty percent of the resultant 900 million  
Argentine pesos (approx. USD 300 million) will go directly to  
affected provincial governments, while the rest is slated for

private businesses.

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Comment  
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15. (SBU) Congressional approval of the Law of the Forest represents a positive development for environmental conservation efforts in Argentina. The law was partly the result of a massive (for Argentina) grass-roots campaign; in October, Greenpeace and other environmentalist groups claimed to have collected a million signatures from supporters of the bill. This law looks great on paper, but the lack of a stable, coherent environmental institutional framework (i.e. proper administration/financial controls and enforcement) means it might end up being largely symbolic. The relatively large sums of money earmarked for affected parties also suggest that the law could be used as a patronage vehicle. Still, it is encouraging that Argentina is taking affirmative steps to protect its environment.

KELLY